

# SPOTS & STRIPES



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## STRICTLY FOR THE BIRDS

Even without its avian tenants, the soon-to-be-reopened Bird House, with its soaring new addition, the Great Flight Cage, is a "thing of beauty" a "joy to behold." Target date for its unveiling is set at January 28, in time for the meeting of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, but this depends largely on when the contractors release the building to the District Commissioners and when they, in turn, approve and turn it over to the National Zoological Park.

This is another world, a tropic paradise. Externally much the same; inside, the new house is really one for the birds. A darkened gallery winds past lighted cages planted in a profusion of tropical spruce, bamboo, palms, grasses, ferns. Illuminated signs alternate with planters behind modern aluminum guard rails; graceful wood paneling, spectator benches, and a circular fountain all add to viewing pleasure.

Fronting most cages are thin vertical wires tautly set an inch apart and so literally invisible that they need to be touched to be believed. In other cages -- those to house the spectacular birds of paradise and cocks-of-the-rock -- concave glass separates viewer from exhibit and intensifies the illusion of openness. Still other cages -- for the delicate hummingbirds, sunbirds, and honey guides -- have flat glass fronts, glare-proof, air-conditioned, and individually temperature-controlled. Throughout the house temperatures will be maintained at an even 68°.

On east and south wings, cages, pools and waterfalls extend out beyond building walls; here the spoonbills, ibis, flamingoes, bustards, and other pinioned species will be free to roam in and out at will. In the area before the "New Delhi" cage extension in the west wing, macaws and parrots will be tethered on perches in open exhibit, while albatross, rails, and terns will have the choice of inside or outside quarters behind them. Every cage has its own pool or pools and its own individual planting designed for the specific birds which will inhabit it. And each cage has at least one removable plastic-sectioned wall; the 28 cages now envisioned can be adapted to any contingency.

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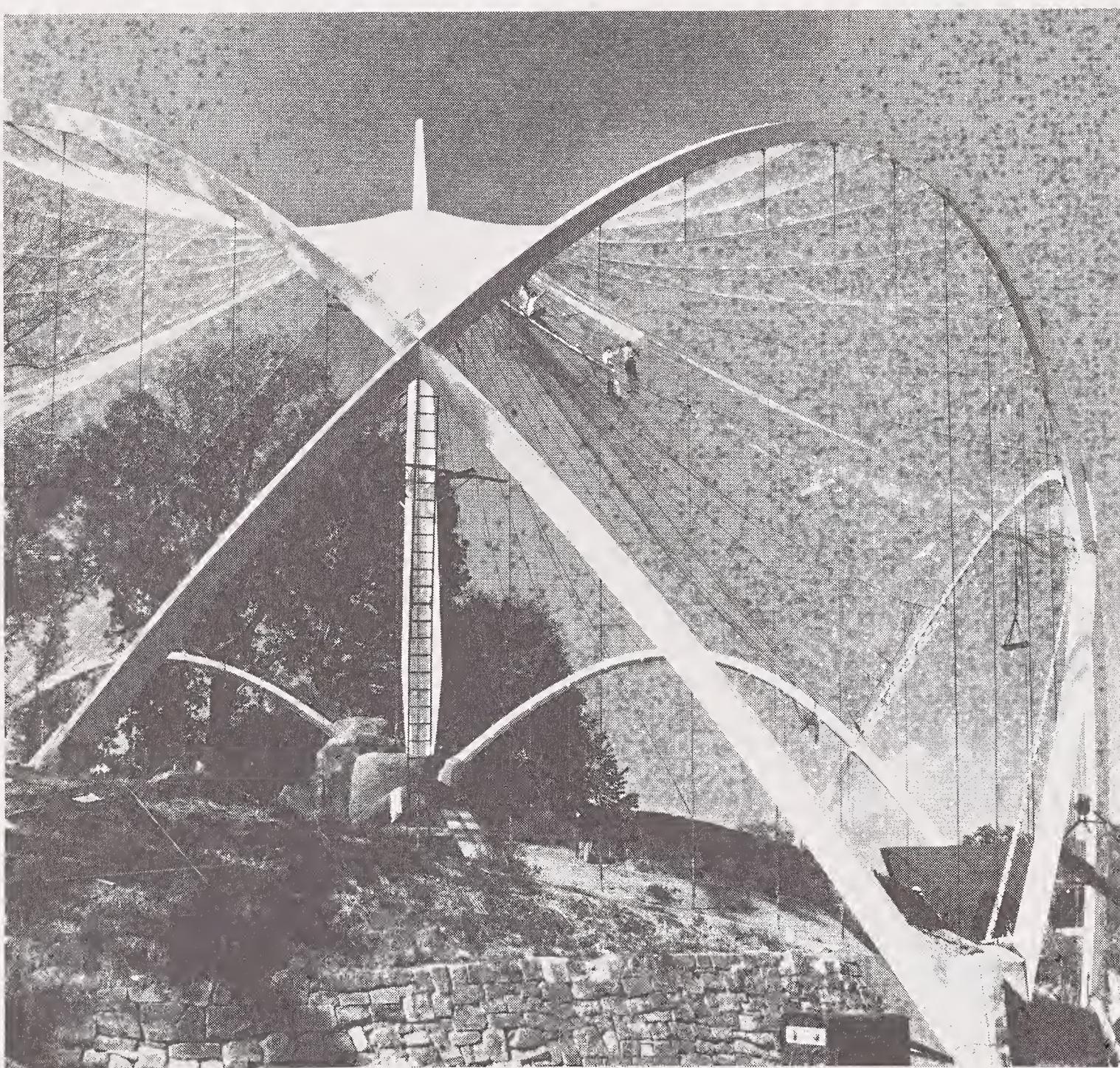
THE FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL ZOO

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Mounting the walls of the interior gallery rises a ramp; it disappears through multicolored bead curtains to emerge high above floor level in the building's free-flight central courtyard (72 feet high by 52 feet square) -- eyeball to eyeball with francolin, avocets, stilts, quail, sandgrouse, cuckoos, toucans, orioles, nuthatches, tanagers and small, non-aggressive perching birds who will have free run of the area. Here there will be no artificial perches; the birds will roost amongst live trees (for whose roots the floor of the building has been excavated), tropical flora, huge rocks (concrete poured over metal framing and spray-painted to look realistic where they are not in fact the actual thing). A recirculating pump provides water for the plashing fall and, on "Tropical Rain Forest" days, for the spray that emanates from nozzles strategically placed high above in the double-plastic skylight to avoid the rock-walled pedestrian pathway below.

And here stands the only recognizable feature of the old bird house-- Stephen Haweis' beautiful mosaic doorway; once at the entrance of the old building, it has been carefully removed in eight sections, hand-cleaned, and now stands at the entrance to the free-flight area. No closed door prevents the freely flying birds from "escaping", but experience has shown that they will not, unless under stress, fly from a known, lighted area into an unknown, darkened one. And, should one

confound statistics and do so, there are still the safety-catches of the surrounding gallery and double-entry outer doors.



(Photograph by Bethlehem Steel Co)

Encircling the free-flight area, the ramp disappears high up the wall through another beaded curtain (and more double doors) to the open, arched bridge leading from house to great flight cage. Ninety feet high by 140 in diameter, this soaring structure resembles nothing so much as a surrealist's dream of a huge tented heaven. Radiating from the central tubular steel post and parabolic steel arches is a 1- by 2-inch fine wire mesh, strong, resilient, and again almost invisible. Here, too, are the giant rocks, the waterfalls, the winding rock-lined walks up and around to eye level with the birds.

Scattered about are cedar-shake triangular shelter huts, whose heated perches are rheostated to turn on when the outside temperature falls below 35° and to remain as nearly as possible at 29°. Direct contact with the cold is not a problem for the hardy North

American birds -- waterfowl, pheasants, quail, cormorants, jays, and pies -- who will, by March, live here. But others -- ibis, spoonbills, egrets -- must be protected against frost-bitten feet.

Soon the last wire will be strung and the last perch installed, and head keeper Bill Widman will begin moving his widely scattered charges back home. Then these lovely new buildings will have heart and soul and voice.

(J. McC.)

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Comment of Joseph A. Davis, Jr., Curator of Mammals, New York Zoological Park, upon getting a preview of the Great Flight Cage: "Holy smoke! The Kookaburra - Hilton!"

\* \* \* \* \*

#### ROUNDING UP NEWS (GNUS) WITH DR. GRAY

Blue notebook in hand we hastened to the Zoo to sketch for Spots and Stripes a working day in the life of Dr. Clinton Gray, Zoo doctor. It was early on a shining November morning. Hiking past the lion house, we consulted a trio of khaki-uniformed attendants. "Have you seen Dr. Gray?" All three nodded and answered in unison, "He just went that way." Then each one pointed in a different direction. We had learned our first important fact about Clint Gray. He can cover a lot of ground in a short time. We were to learn that he did it without ever seeming to hurry. At length we found the veterinarian in his office, newly returned from a round of early "house calls." He was standing over a well-ordered desk, a long lean form in khaki, leafing through correspondence. The phone rang and he answered it while scanning a letter from a zoo director in Barcelona, Spain. "Sure," he said to the phone. "O.K. Let's do the monkeys right after lunch."

The outside door banged open and shut. A keeper from the reptile house slipped in, face worried. The Cuban tree boa had attempted to down too much breakfast at once and seemed in danger of coming to grief. "I'll be right along," said Dr. Gray easily. The phone rang again, this time about a staff meeting, and the Zoo vet pulled on a jacket all the while he was talking. He picked up a rattling blue metal box, filled with whatever a vet might need, and was ready to go by the time the phone landed in its cradle again.

We followed Dr. Gray and the reptile keeper through a side door of the reptile house and were soon behind the long row of pastel-colored snake cages. There indeed was the sufferer, looking more sheepish-eyed than mortally distressed, curling around to gaze at the doctor. Fortunately he had managed to down his meal safely. Attention then turned to another reptilian patient, a rat snake needing an abscess lanced. We backed up to a generously safe distance as the long creature was stretched out to full length by three husky keepers. Leaning against a sign that warned, "Anacondas are Aggressive", we watched breathlessly while Dr. Gray performed surgery in the best hospital arena tradition, quick and quiet in his orders, without wasted motion. It was better than watching Ben Casey. We left the snake swathed in half a roll of bandage.

It was time to round up five gnus. They were not ailing. Far from it, they turned out to be abundantly healthy and strong. Dr. Gray, however, was in the middle of giving routine tuberculosis tests to zoo animals, and this was the day

for the gnus. I clung to the seat of a canary yellow vehicle as we bumped uphill to the rear of the gnu yards. Six keepers were busy with a specially constructed chute. They backed it up to the closed door of an animal house, and we watched in wonder as keepers and Doctor Gray adjusted the chute in a dozen different ways, pushed levers and bars, and worried over the contraption as if it were a launching pad. I could tell they were not expecting the best of cooperation from the bearded antelopes that waited somewhere in the shadows of the building behind them. When at last all was ready, and the six keepers were crouched and ready for I knew not what roles, we retreated to watch. I felt almost disappointed, therefore, when the door behind the chute slid open and a medium-sized gnu stepped mildly out, entering the chute like a Guernsey cow stepping into a daisy patch. What a Ferdinand act after all that fuss, we thought! The explosion came a second later as the gnu realized it was boxed. It plunged forward, hoofs like machine gun fire on the floor of the chute. Metal crashed against metal as rods were rammed into place behind the animal. A hair-crested rump erupted above the upper slats of the chute as the creature bucked, and a black tail etched furious circles in the air. A keeper secured the animal's horns with a lasso and soon it was quiet for a few moments. It took Dr. Gray only those few moments to deftly empty readied syringes of the testing serum into the grey rump, but we did not envy his position, so close to the heels of a very angry gnu. Four other gnus were at length inoculated and returned to their house. Dr. Gray emerged from the yard, packed up syringes and bottles. His mind was already on the next project. "Come on and see my zebra," he said.

We moved off in the yellow vehicle to check the Grevy's zebra that had broken a leg some months before. Dr. Gray had set the bone and kept it in a cast while it mended. Now he studied the animal from outside the enclosure, always talking in the soft tone he uses with animals. "Hey there ol' buddy. How're you doing?" The zebra showed no trace of a limp. Satisfied, Dr. Gray called a break for lunch, a quick one at the Zoo cafeteria.

The afternoon brought more routine TB tests. This time, a group of monkeys were to be inoculated, bringing us an opportunity to view the Zoo hospital, an impressive and well-equipped center of veterinarian operations. In one airy, sunlit room were stainless steel cages for smaller animal patients. Dr. Gray took time to exchange his usual soothing banter with a monkey named Tanya which was bent on reaching through the cage door to steal whatever might be in the doctor's pockets. We moved on to chat with a newly arrived ocelot, a cavy with a chewed tail, and a sooty mangabey in a very sour mood. There were five or six monkeys to be inoculated. This, we learned, was an exacting job because, unlike the gnus, the primates receive their shots in the eyelid. Despite difficulties, the work was deftly done.

Dr. Gray's departure for a staff meeting gave us a chance to scan the daily reports to the curator and thus learn more about Clint Gray's daily work and problems. The records told of doctoring a laughing thrush's bad leg, of diagnosing ailing pythons and droopy grey hornbills. The ibex's feet had been trimmed, the hippo's tusk tended, the wolves wormed. The Komodo dragon had been given an enema and the swollen jaw of a European squirrel doctored. Then, too, there were the newborns and the newly hatched, all requiring attention. A formula had to be devised for a baby two-toed sloth the size of a tennis ball. In addition to the special problems, of course, there are routine rounds. Dr. Gray's meeting done, we followed him from one house to another, past enclosures, uphill and down. Animals recognized the friendly voice and seemed to respond magically. "Hi ol' buddy. How're you doing?" The afternoon waned. Attendants were heading for the gates, their day done. A uniformed keeper hurried up a path. Would Dr. Gray come on up to the small mammal house? It was a squirrel monkey this time. The keepers were worried.

## PERSONNEL

This issue's thumbnail sketch:

### Veterinarian, Clinton W. Gray, D. V. M.

Clint Gray came to the Zoo in May 1963. "Doc" graduated from Michigan State University, has been in private practice, went to Mexico for the U. S. Department of Agriculture on a foot-and-mouth disease control project, worked for subsidiary branches of Smith, Kline and French, and did overseas duty for the Agency for International Development in West Africa, Central and South America (principally Bolivia and Colombia for eight years). Doc said to tell you he's "tall, handsome, and charming -- one of the best gol darn vets that ever put on a pair of shoes." And that's no lie. He is! If you don't believe us, some time just watch our big male gorilla whoop for joy when Clint goes in the small mammal house. Mind you, this is after Doc cured Nicky of paralysis, sticking him with daily needles for three months! Oh, one thing Clint forgot to mention. Knowing Spanish fluently, he's a great translator, too.

M. P. McC.

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In November of 1919 the Zoo hired a new keeper, a young lad of 21 years, and paid him the going rate of \$2.25 a day! In December of 1964 this same keeper, Mike Brown, is retiring after 45 years of carefully tending whatever animal came within his domain. It is interesting to note that Mike's salary is now more per hour than he used to make per day. Mike got to be a rather permanent fixture in the lion house and it is hard to imagine the lion house without him. Although Caesar, the male African lion, is reportedly Mike's favorite of all the animals, one has only to look at his beaming face when he shows off the newborn tigers, lions and leopards to realize that his pride is unlimited and his love encompasses them all. The privilege of being allowed by Mike to hold one of the furry babies when it is only a few days old is a matchless thrill. We will all miss our good friend Mike, and by this I mean humans as well as the animals; somehow the lion house is never going to be the same without him.

The Zoo's loss is to be double in December as our Headkeeper, Ralph Norris, also retires the same day as Mike. Ralph hasn't been with us as long as Mike as he had other things to do before coming to the Zoo in 1930 but his 34 years were eventful ones. Probably the highlight of his career was the six-months collecting trip to Liberia in 1940, resulting in nearly two hundred prime specimens for our collection. Ralph is always gentle and kind and his love for all the animals is outstanding. He has the reputation for being able to "sweet talk" any sort of recalcitrant animal into docility. This talent was ably demonstrated one day when one of the snow leopards decided to see the world. She had got out of her house and was roving in the fenced-in area which surrounds a complex of cages, including a bird cage and a monkey cage. "Katze" was not in the public space and did not pose a threat to public safety, either as a free-roaming animal or even by inclination because, having been reared on a bottle, she always thought she was a privileged character and sometimes even people. She shortly returned to her house walking alongside Ralph like an obedient dog while Ralph murmured softly, "C'mon sugar baby, come along sweetheart."

The esteem, respect and love which we hold in our hearts for these two topnotch men can never be replaced. Even though they no longer will be here with us every day, they will always be an integral part of the Zoo. We wish them well in their retirement --they have earned it - but somehow we wish their tenure was just beginning rather than ending.

B. E. H.

## MONKEY BUSINESS

One of the annual events at the Zoo that seems to delight the visitors, keepers, and the animals involved, is the release of the capuchin monkeys onto Monkey Island with the advent of warm spring weather. Each year the island in the water-fowl pond is carefully surveyed to make sure all the branches are cut back far enough to prevent escape; all extraneous material is removed, and the monkeys' little tree house is inspected for possible roof leaks.

When all is ready, the capuchin colony is released for a summer of circumscribed freedom. They scurry over the island, seemingly checking every nook and cranny as if to make sure the summer home is in the same condition as when they left, and the old favorite haunts are visited and revisited. After the initial investigation is over they settle down to the business at hand -- catching tossed peanuts and other goodies.

I call one of the capuchins "Rocky" although I am sure he has many other names, depending upon the mood of the keepers. Rocky has a rather endearing habit of carrying a small rock in his hand, and he spends nearly all his waking hours (when he isn't eating) banging his little rock on other rocks and often rattling it on the tin roof of the tree house. This, surely, is drumming in its most primitive form, and its purpose has been given many anthropomorphic connotations by the visitors, the most popular being that Rocky is using the rock to break open peanuts!

The first year Monkey Island was to be used, it was carefully inspected, but one extraneous item overlooked was an elderly infertile egg that had been abandoned by a swan. Rocky made a bee-line for this seemingly perfect rock, clutched it in his greedy little hand, and holding it aloft, made rapidly for the sanctuary of the tree house. The other capuchins, sensing Rocky's treasure, raced after him hoping to share in the windfall. Just about the time that all the capuchins had squeezed into the house, Rocky's inclination to bang rocks got the better of him, and the shell of the egg didn't withstand more than two whacks.

Without being able to see inside, observers knew immediately what had happened when monkey forms boiled out, scrambling all over each other in their frantic haste to draw in a deep gulp of precious, sweet-smelling air. The last one out was Rocky, and for a day or two he huddled in miserable isolation. Whether he just smelled bad or the other capuchins were giving him the "silent treatment" is pure conjecture, but he really didn't seem to be very popular.

The odor was pretty bad for several days, and even though the island was kept neat and tidy there were many wrinkled noses as visitors filed by, none tarrying very long. Ever since, the island has been minutely searched for any abandoned eggs, but I often wonder if such a precaution is necessary, for surely Rocky could never face another egg, much less mistake one for a rock!

B. E. H.

## MORE QUOTES FROM THE DAILY ANIMAL REPORTS

Forty fancy goldfish were received November 6 from the Japanese Consul General in New York. These goldfish are part of the Japanese Imperial collection and had been on exhibit at the New York World's Fair.

The herd of Sika deer, consisting of one male and 6 females was transported to the Baltimore Zoo by NZP personnel. The Sika will remain on deposit at Baltimore until the new yards here are prepared.

One of the small common iguanas, which were in the outside enclosure during the summer, is unaccounted for. There is a possibility that it is in a hole in the tree.

The first crop of hydroponic grass has been harvested by the commissary and delivered to a variety of animals and birds. There was a diversified reaction -- some ate it readily and others played with it. Nancy Elephant wore it as a hat, which delighted the onlookers.

Butch, the male orangutan, was given a shot by Dr. Gray which, it is hoped, will encourage him to ponder the birds and bees, the facts of life, the primrose path, and thereby commit himself to an incipient course leading to an eventual role of paterfamilias.

#### THE BOOKSHELF

Mammals of the World by Ernest P. Walker and Associates. Vols. I and II, boxed, 1568 pages, 1800 illustrations, \$25.00; Vol. III (bibliography) 700 pages, \$12.50. Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, Md.

It is with pride that Spots and Stripes announces the publication of these volumes, which were 30 years in preparation. Ernest P. Walker is a charter member of the Friends of the National Zoo and was, for 27 years, assistant director of the National Zoological Park. Since his retirement in 1956 he has devoted his entire time to the completion of his monumental work, which was sponsored by the New York Zoological Society and financed by the National Institutes of Health. Among the "associates" who are given credit on the title page, is Billie Hamlet, a frequent contributor to this newsletter.

It was Mr. Walker's ambition to give a description of every known mammal living today, and to accompany this with a photograph of a living representative of every genus. Of 1,040 genera known, all but four are represented; many of the photographs were made by Mr. Walker himself.

The bibliography is intended primarily for research scientists, but Volumes I and II are written not only for the professional mammalogist, but for the layman as well. In non-technical language, the appearance and habits of each genus are described. In addition to the black-and-white photographs, line drawings of interesting anatomical peculiarities enliven many of the pages. In a Foreword, Fairfield Osborn, President of the New York Zoological Society, writes: "The content and scope of these volumes represent a unique and highly valuable contribution to zoological literature. There is no other single series of books that in themselves can be used as a basic source of reference concerning all the known and present genera of mammalian life on this earth."

Congratulations, Ernest Walker!

T. H. R.

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THE SIXTH ANNUAL MEETING of the  
FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL ZOO

will be held on Thursday, January 14th, at 8 P. M.

in the Auditorium of the

Museum of History and Technology

Smithsonian Institution

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The program, in addition to the election of the Board of Governors and the Officers, will include a showing of the film made of the birth of the white tiger cubs. The outgoing officers will make their annual reports, and Dr. Reed, Director of the National Zoological Park, will give a brief report on the progress of the current building program. In the absence of Mr. S. Dillon Ripley, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, Mr. James Bradley, Assistant Secretary, will greet us on behalf of the Smithsonian.

We hope you will find it possible to attend the annual meeting.

Mrs. S. Noble Robinson, Pres.  
Dr. Malcolm Henderson, VP  
Mr. Arthur A. Arundel, VP

Mrs. Cazenove Lee VP  
Mr. W. Horton Schoellkopf, Treas.  
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